

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5752

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 0831

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EI, PFOR, ECON

SUBJ: QUARTERLY TRENDS REPORT

SUMMARY: THE FALL OF NORTHERN IRELAND'S FIRST PROTESTANT/CATHOLIC
JOINT ADMINISTRATION COULD POSE EVENTUAL PROBLEMS
FOR US POLICY. THERE ARE TWO BROAD OPTIONS FOR NI. NEGATIVE
OPTION INVOLVES MASSIVE HUMAN SUFFERING THROUGH CIVIL WAR OR
FORCED MIGRATION. SOME US POLICY DECISIONS WOULD BE REQUIRED.
RECENT EVENTS HAVE FAVORED THIS OPTION, BUT WE DO NOT EXPECT
MAJOR TROUBLE IN NEXT QUARTER. WE STILL SEE CHANCE FOR
POSITIVE OPTION, WHICH WOULD BE PEACEFUL POLITICAL SOLUTION.
ON ISSUE OF US/EC RELATIONS, THERE IS NO RECENT MOVEMENT IN
DUBLIN.

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1. A SERIOUS REVERSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND HAS CREATED NEW PROBLEMS

HERE. IT MAY ALSO HAVE CREATED LONG-TERM ISSUES FOR US POLICY. THE EVENT WAS THE COLLAPSE OF THE NI "POWER-SHARING" EXECUTIVE -- THE FIRST ADMINISTRATION IN THE HISTORY OF NI WHICH GAVE CATHOLICS A REAL SHARE OF POWER. ALONG WITH THE EXECUTIVE, THE OTHER COMPONENT OF THE SUNNINGDALE POLITICAL COMPROMISE ALSO COLLAPSED, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY. THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE WAS A GENERAL STRIKE BY "LOYALISTS," SUPPORTED BY ENOUGH OF THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY TO PARALYZE THE ECONOMY. CONTINUING VIOLENCE BY THE PROVISIONAL IRA WAS ALSO A FACTOR, SINCE IT MADE THE ATTEMPTED POLITICAL SOLUTION SEEM USELESS TO MANY PEOPLE. PERFORMANCE OF THE LONDON AND DUBLIN GOVERNMENTS IS ALSO OPEN TO CRITICISM, BUT OF A DIFFERENT KIND. PROTESTANTS AND CATHOLIC EXTREMISTS WERE EXPLICITLY TRYING TO TORPEDO A MODERATE POLITICAL COMPROMISE, WHILE LONDON AND DUBLIN WERE AT WORST GUILTY OF TIMIDITY AND ERRORS.

2. ALTHOUGH THE SUNNINGDALE POLITICAL PACKAGE HAS TAKEN A SERIOUS DEFEAT, NO ONE HAS PRODUCED ANY VIABLE, PEACEFUL ALTERNATIVE TO IT. EXTREMES ON BOTH SIDES WANT TO DEFEAT THEIR OPPOSITIES, WHICH CAN ONLY BE DONE BY OUTRIGHT CIVIL WAR, MASS MIGRATION, OR SOME OTHER "SOLUTION" INVOLVING VAST SUFFERING FOR BOTH SIDES. WE STILL BELIEVE, THUS, THAT THE MOST USEFUL ANALYTICAL APPROACH IS TO PICTURE TWO BROAD OPTIONS FOR NI, ONE POSITIVE AND ONE NEGATIVE. THE NEGATIVE OPTION IS WAR BETWEEN THE PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES AND/OR MIGRATION. THE POSITIVE OPTION HAS TO BE MUCH LIKE THE ONE ALREADY TRIED -- WITH SOME SLIGHT VARIATIONS IN THE RECIPE, MORE EFFORTS TO INVOLVE CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANT POLITICIANS, AND (MOST IMPORTANT) MORE TIME FOR ATTITUDE CHANGE.

3. THE DUBLIN GOVERNMENT FEARS THAT THE NI BALANCE HAS NOW TIPPED TOWARD THE NEGATIVE OPTION, OR CIVIL WAR -- NOT RIGHT NOW, NECESSARILY, BUT IF THE PRESENT TREND CONTINUES. THIS ASSESSMENT MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUS. THE GOI IS EXTREMELY DISPIRITED BY THE COLLAPSE OF AN EFFORT IN WHICH IT HAD INVESTED ALL OF ITS ENERGIES AND EMOTIONS. THE DEPRESSION WHICH PREVAILS IN DUBLIN IS A PROBLEM IN ITSELF, BOTH FOR RELATIONS WITH THE NORTH AND PERHAPS FOR LOCAL POLITICAL STABILITY. ONE MUST HOPE THAT THE GOI WILL RECOVER SOME OF ITS PLUCK, BECAUSE THEN PRESENT CABINET INCLUDES

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TWO OR THREE TALENTED MINISTERS WHO ARE THE VERY BEST MEN IN THE COUNTRY TO TACKLE THE NORTH/SOUTH PROBLEM. IF THEY LOSE SPIRIT, THEY WILL BE HARD TO REPLACE.

4. WHILE FULLY AGREEING THAT THE TREND HAS BEEN BAD, HOWEVER, WE CONTINUE TO SEE A CHANCE FOR THE POSITIVE OPTION. THERE SHOULD BE LITTLE SURPRISE WHEN A FAIR, AMBITIOUS POLITICAL SOLUTIONS FAILS ON ITS FIRST TRY, AFTER FIFTY YEARS OF PRIMITIVE SECTARIAN

DOMINATION. VAST ATTITUDE CHANGE IS NEEDED TO MAKE SUCH A CHANGE WORK. THERE ARE ALREADY SIGNS THAT A SIGNIFICANT SEGMENT OF THE PROTESTANT COMMUNITY IS WILLING TO CONSIDER SHARING POWER WITH CATHOLICS, AND THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT IN ANY POLITICAL SOLUTION. THE OTHER TWO MAIN INGREDIENTS ARE DOMESTIC REFORMS AND NORTH/SOUTH COOPERATIVE LINKS ("THE IRISH DIMENSION"). BOTH WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE ONLY SLOWLY. OF THE REFORMS, THE MAIN ONE WANTED BY CATHOLICS IS A POLICE FORCE THAT IS ABOVE SECTARIAN POLITICS, AND THIS IS AT LEAST AS DIFFICULT AS POLITICAL POWER-SHARING. THE DUBLIN GOVT IS WILLING IN PRINCIPLE TO GO VERY SLOW ON NEW NORTH/SOUTH LINKS, BUT THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND MAY BE MORE DIFFICULT TO RESTRAIN.

5. EVEN IF THE POSITIVE SCENARIO PREVAILS, SUCCESS MAY TAKE MANY YEARS. THERE COULD BE NEW FAILURES AND A LONG PERIOD OF DIRECT RULE FROM LONDON. NEW ELECTIONS ARE LIKELY IN THE AUTUMN, BUT NO ONE EXPECTS THAT THEY WILL PRODUCE A DRAMATIC BREAKTHROUGH. FOR US POLICY, HOWEVER, DELAYS AND PARTIAL FAILURE POSE ON SPECIAL PROBLEMS.

6. A DISTINCT DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION, ON THE OTHER HAND, COULD POSE ISSUES REQUIRING DECISION IN WASHINGTON. THE BRITISH MIGHT NEED MORE TROOPS FROM THEIR NATO COMMITMENTS. EVEN WORSE, PUBLIC PRESSURE IN BRITAIN COULD EVENTUALLY FORCE WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH TROOPS BEFORE A STABLE SOLUTION HAS BEEN ACHIEVED. (THIS IS THE MAIN GOI FEAR). IN THIS CASE, THE IRISH WOULD PROBABLY REQUEST A UN PEACEKEEPING FORCE, AND THE REQUEST WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY -- EVEN THOUGH WE THINK ANY UN FORCE WOULD BE VASTLY LESS EFFECTIVE THAN THE BRITISH. THE CATHOLIC SIDE WOULD FARE WORST IN THE INITIAL STEPS OF MASS VIOLENCE OR FORCED MIGRATION, CREATING HEAVY PRESSURE ON USG TO "DO SOMETHING," BUT WE CANNOT EASILY FORESEE ANY EFFECTIVE US ROLE. SUCH ISSUES ARE STILL SPECULATIVE, BUT NO LONGER FAR-CONFIDENTIAL

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FETCHED. WE HAVE MADE CONTINGENCY RECOMMENDATIONS IN OUR PARA CONTRIBUTIONS AND IN OTHER CABLES. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, WE DO NOT THINK IT LIKELY THAT THESE ISSUES WILL ARISE IN THE NEXT QUARTER.

US/EC RELATIONS

7. FRENCH PRESIDENT ELECTIONS, AND THE SUSPENSION OF EC WORK ON AN ATLANTIC DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, HAVE TAKEN PRESSURE OFF THE ISSUE OF US/EC RELATIONS. THE IRISH ARE DELIGHTED NOT TO HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT IT. UNFORTUNATELY, WE SEE NO SIGN THAT THEY HAVE USED THE BREATHING SPACE TO WORK OUT THEIR CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS WITH US/EC RELATIONS. THEY DO NOT EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT EUROPEAN SECURITY, AND THEY DEEPLY FEAR ANY CHANGES IN THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY. AS FAR AS WE CAN SEE, THE

COINCIDENCE OF THESE WITH FRENCH INTERESTS WILL PROBABLY CAUSE THE IRISH TO CONTINUE THEIR PRESENT TACTICAL ALLIANCE WITH PARIS. THE LEADING OPPOSITION PARTY IS EVEN STRONGER ON THIS THAN THE GOVT. (THE FIANNA FAIL PARTY HAS JOINED THE GAULLIST BLOC IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, WHICH SEEMS ABSURD EVEN TO SOME IRISH OBSERVERS.) WE WILL BE INTERESTED TO SEE IRISH REACTION TO ANY CHANGES IN FRENCH POLICY UNDER THE NEW PRESIDENT.
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